

SIMILE ZOLA, NOVELIST AND REFORMER
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Every Thursday, for some years, those five young men, two of whom, Maupassant and Huysmans, afterwards rose to eminence, visited Zola and talked " literature " with him, even as on Sundays he and they visited Gustave Flaubert. The latter, amid all the hubbub and controversy provoked by " L'Assommoir," felt that Zola was going too far, at least farther than he, Flaubert, would have gone. He always underrated his own realism —or naturalism, if one prefer that term — as displayed in "Madame Bovary," as well as his own philosophy, outlined in " L'Education sentimentale " and " La Tentation de St. Antoine " ; and if Zola's account of him be accurate, his one ambition was to be known and remembered as a stylist, a master of impeccable French. He even denied that " Madame Bovary " marked any evolution in fiction, he shut his eyes to the deductions which others drew from it, and thus, when he found himself confronted by Zola's venturesome theories, he was at first at a loss to account for them. In one sense his astonishment was amusing: it suggested the surprise of the cause at the sight of so remarkable an effect. But if he twitted Zola about his naturalist professions of faith he did so, as G-oncourt observes, " avec de tres grands coups de chapeau "

for he fully recognised the ability of the man
who claimed
to be his disciple. One thing which he did
not like was
the eagerness with which Zola accepted
controversy and
proclaimed his doctrines on all possible
occasions, for this
seemed to be too suggestive of self-
advertisement.

Devoue," 1878. Both the latter as well as Alexis maybe best
classed as
playwrights, their later and principal literary work having
been done for the
stage. Like Maupassant and Huysmans, however, they
contributed with
Zola to "Les Soirees de Medan," 1880, which will be noticed
in its proper
place.